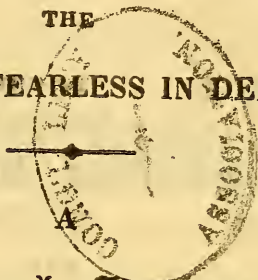




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THE
CHRISTIAN FEARLESS IN DEATH.



Funeral Sermon

OCCASIONED BY THE DECEASE

OF

MRS. BLACKETT,

OF

Highbury Place,

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 15th, 1818.

AT

UNION CHAPEL, ISLINGTON,

BY THE REV. THOMAS LEWIS.

LONDON:

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1818.

TO THE
Surviving Relatives
AND
FRIENDS OF THE DECEASED
THE
FOLLOWING DISCOURSE,

Printed at their Particular Request,

For Private Circulation,

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED BY

THEIR OBEDIENT

HUMBLE SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

Islington,
Feb. 20th, 1818.

A SERMON, &c.

PSALM xxiii. 1, 2, 3, 4.

“The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, for his name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”

WHEN David, the son of Jesse, ascended the throne of Israel, a new and improved era opened upon the religious, as well as political state of that chosen nation. He was evidently gifted by the Holy Spirit to accomplish important purposes; and his training began at an early period of his life. While he was yet a stripling, and tending his father’s flock, on the plains of Bethlehem, he

was distinguished by inspirations from Heaven; which might have pointed him out as a child of no ordinary destiny. His talents for music and poetry were of the very first order; but his Muse was altogether Divine. His sequestered and rural condition of life was favourable to poetic observation; but his observations were enlightened from above, and the excitations of his heart were derived from the Spirit of God. The simplicity and stillness of the pastoral life afforded him leisure to cultivate his contemplative and devotional taste. In this humble capacity it was that he composed the most useful and most delightful of the songs of Zion. It was then he more particularly obtained the distinguishing appellation of "The man after God's own heart." Many of his sweetest Psalms bear internal evidence of their pastoral origin: and whether or not the Psalm before us was actually composed at that early period of the Psalmist's life, the beautiful allegory it contains is evidently drawn from

the employments and the scenery to which he was then accustomed.

Led by the hand of Jehovah through many and wonderful vicissitudes of life, he saw himself at last the monarch of the most distinguished people upon earth.— For this he was born, and for this he was educated. To say nothing of his military prowess, by which, under Divine aid, he subdued the enemies of his country, established the independance of his kingdom, and caused the name of Israel to be highly respected among all the surrounding nations, the services which he rendered to the Jewish Church were singularly great. He was not, indeed, permitted to build the House which he had designed for the solemn worship of God; but he appointed the “courses of the Priests and Levites” who were to serve in the Temple, arranged the order of the service, and left for the use of the Church that excellent Manual of prayer and praise, which has not ceased to administer in-

struction and consolation to the people of God in every subsequent age. The Songs of “the sweet Psalmist of Israel” have continued and ever will continue, like streams from the fountain of God, to quicken and refresh the weary pilgrim on his way to the Heavenly Zion. Long have they run, and many have they refreshed; but they have neither subsided in their depth, nor lost any thing of their original qualities. The taste of these streams is delightful to the purified palate—“more to be desired are they than gold; yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb.” Happy is he who, when he drinks at these streams, imbibes the spirit of him, who, under the influence of God, caused them to flow!

Such, indeed, is the beauty of these sacred pieces, such the unction of pure and fervent devotion with which they abound, and so warm do they appear to come from the heart of the inspired composer, that he must be singularly

callous within, who can read them unconscious of profitable emotions. Who, for instance, in reading the Psalm before us, is not sensible of the most pleasing ideas—of emotions of gratitude, confidence and love? “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, for his name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”

In this grateful effusion of the pious Psalmist these pleasing considerations are especially prominent.

- I. An interesting and endearing relation claimed.
- II. An ample provision secured.
- III. Tender care and rich resources enjoyed and acknowledged.
- IV. A happy and triumphant consummation fully anticipated.

And, as these several topics pass under review, may the Spirit of the Lord rest upon us, as a Spirit of wisdom and understanding to guard me from the evil of darkening counsel with words without knowledge, and to make a deep and salutary impression on the minds and consciences of all!

I.—*An interesting and endearing relation is here claimed.* In condescension to the weakness of our faculties, and the limits of our knowledge, the great God permits his nature, his character and his conduct, to be represented under such sensible and familiar figures, as will at once instruct and impress us. We are not equal to a purely intellectual and unveiled display of spiritual things. The scenery of external nature, and the occupations of human society are therefore frequently employed to illustrate some of the sublimest and most interesting truths of religion. Whatever in either of these departments we perceive to be great, beautiful, or good, is

assumed by the Spirit of inspiration to convey Divine instruction. Of this the instance in our text has ever been deservedly admired. What tender poetry, what ardent piety, are here united to delight the imagination, and to engage the heart! The scenery is rural. The character under which the Psalmist introduces the God whom he loved and served, is recommended to us by the happiest associations—it is that of a SHEPHERD—"The Lord is my SHEPHERD."—An appropriation truly delightful; for the blessed God himself acknowledges the relation. He has suffered himself to be thus described in various passages of Holy Writ. The Church claims him under the same character, when she prays, "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel; thou that leadest Joseph like a flock!" Thus he is described in ancient prophecy. He is the tender Shepherd, who "gathers the lambs in his arms and gently leads those that are with young." And thus he spake of himself when he condescended

to appear in our nature and in our world, “I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.”—O! how well is the title applied to him! He possesses in an eminent degree the peculiar properties of a good Shepherd. With him it is no nominal assumption, as is the case with many among us, who undertake certain offices and services for which they possess no qualifications. He has all the requisites for fully answering the character, and for discharging all the important services that it involves,

Time would fail us to trace out his meetness and sufficiency in all their extent. We are not, indeed, capable of fully conceiving the consummate excellence and grace of the Redeemer, when he is thus represented to our view; but there is one feature which cannot fail to impress our minds as we look at him in the interesting and endearing character he sustains in our text.—It is that of *tender solicitude* for the welfare of his

people. A good Shepherd is attentive to the state of his flock;—and the “Shepherd of Israel is pre-eminently solicitous about the objects of his superintendence and love. It was his solicitude for the spiritual and eternal welfare of those whom the Father had given to the Son in the covenant of Redemption that led him to lay aside his glory, and to become a “Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet, for your sakes, he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”—Ah! Brethren, when the whole sinful race might have been justly left to “fill up the measure of their iniquities, till wrath came upon them to the uttermost,” his bowels of compassion yearned over them.—He came into the world to seek and to save: and though it was expedient, after making atonement for sin, that he should enter into the “Holy Place, to appear in the presence of God,” he is not unmindful of the situation and cir-

cumstances of his people, during their pilgrimage on earth, but is actively employed on their behalf. He vouchsafes to them the influence of his Holy Spirit to “lead them into all truth,” to bring them to an acquaintance with the things that belong to their peace, and to guide them in safety through the wilderness, to the mansions of eternal bliss.

But pleasing as it may be to contemplate the Redeemer under the character of the “good Shepherd,” how much more important and delightful is it to be able to lay an humble claim to him as *our* Shepherd? This was the privilege of the Psalmist. “The Lord,” says he, “is *my* Shepherd”—not merely “the Shepherd of Israel” in general, but *mine* in particular.—And every true believer, every partaker of the grace that is in Christ Jesus, every regenerate soul, may say the same.—Yes, timid and diffident soul! if thou hast been brought to hear the voice of thy Redeemer speaking to thee in his word and by his Spirit—

convincing thee of thy lost and helpless state by nature, and inclining thee to fly to him as thy only refuge, and to follow him as thy only guide, thou, too, may'st say with David, "The Lord is my Shepherd."

This is the language of humble confidence, and sacred complacency.

1st.—*Of humble confidence.* The Psalmist was fully satisfied, from what had passed between God and his own soul, that he was warranted to say this. He knew that God had "made with him an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure;" that he had sent the spirit of adoption into his heart, and given him such pledges, such indubitable proofs of his loving kindness and tender mercy, that, in reference to his own pastoral life, and to the solicitude he felt, as the Shepherd of his father's flock, he could lift up his eyes, and his heart to heaven, and say, "I too have a Shepherd, and the Lord is he. The God

of my life regards me with a Shepherd's care. I am one of his flock, and enjoy that superintendence which never intermits."

The whole human race, indeed, are dependant on this Divine character. His bountiful hand supplies their wants, and preserves them from innumerable dangers; so that, in this respect, "we are all his people and the sheep of his pasture." He openeth his hand, and supplies the wants of every living thing; "The Lord is good to all and his tender mercies are over all his works." But the Psalmist intends something more than this in the claim here laid to the Lord as *his* Shepherd.—O! yes, my Brethren, it intimates that he had been brought into the spiritual fold of God; and admitted to the privileges of his spiritual flock; that he was taken under his immediate care and protection, and shared in the benefits and blessings of the members of his family. And "this honour have all his saints." Whoever

amongst us, Brethren, have been made partakers of like grace with him may say the same.—Yes, if any of us, who were once as sheep going astray, wandering from the fountains of living waters, and the green pastures of the good Shepherd, living without God, without Christ, in the world, have been convinced of our sin and folly, and led to return to him from whom we had revolted;—if we have really seen and felt our perishing condition by nature, our absolute need of Divine interposition in our behalf, and are influenced by the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to glorify the Saviour, to cast ourselves on him, as “made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness and redemption,” then may we also lay an humble claim to the interesting and endearing relation, and say, “the Lord is *our* Shepherd.”

2ndly.—It is the language of *sacred complacency*.—It is, as I may say, the burst of delight. As the Psalmist revolves the goodness, and enters into

gracious communion with him, his joys run high—his heart is full of gratitude; and he vents it in the exclamation, “The Lord is *my* Shepherd.” And what are the seasons of the believer’s sweetest enjoyments—when are the moments of his highest exultation?—Most surely, in communion with his Lord and Saviour. I may, indeed, contemplate the character and works of the Lord Jesus, as displayed in his incarnation, sufferings and death, with some degree of admiration and delight; but it is only the experience of my happy interest in him, of my claim, through the influence of his grace, to the promises and privileges of his people, that can give birth to the sacred complacency, and excite the exulting appropriation involved in these words, “The Lord is *my* Shepherd.”—O! what pleasure can equal that which proceeds from contemplating the excellencies of him, concerning whom we are enabled to say, each for himself, “He is *my* Lord and *my* God; he is *my* Guardian, *my* Provider, *my*

Leader, *my Shepherd!*” May it be *our* felicity to be numbered among the sheep of his pasture, and to enjoy the sympathy of his heart and the protection of his arm! Blessed, supremely blessed, is the flock of which the Infinite Jehovah is the Shepherd! Contemplating himself in such a relation as this, well might the Psalmist add, “I shall not want.” And here we are reminded of another prominent consideration in this grateful effusion, which is,

II. *An ample provision secured.* The wants of worldlings are perpetual. They have ever some new object in view—some new desire, and are constantly crying, “Who will shew us any good.” Their desires are insatiable. Whatever they possess, they are still in want; for their possessions cannot satisfy. They seek happiness in vain, because they seek it in the creature. The region of their search is far too low. True happiness is of heavenly origin, and must come from God. I might appeal to

those who are yet strangers to that grace which religion inspires. They know by sad experience how void of satisfaction all their enjoyments have been. How often, when they have grasped the object of their most ardent wishes, have they been astonished to find themselves far, very far, below their anticipations.—Ah! still one thing is needful to give a relish to every earthly good, and that is, the sweet appropriation of these words, “The Lord is *my* Shepherd, I shall not want.” Blessed assurance! O how often is the soul of the Christian pilgrim cast down for want of exercising this grace! How often, in the absence of this grace, has he admitted painful apprehensions, injurious to himself and dishonourable to his Saviour! But the Psalmist, knowing on whom he relied, and in whom he hoped, was satisfied that he who provides for the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field, would not suffer him to lack any good thing.

Christian Pilgrims! your fears have often suggested that poverty may be *your* portion, that “distress may come upon you, as one that travaileth, and want as an armed man;” but for more pleasing expectations you have every security that the heart, the promise, the death and the life of Jesus can afford. O, listen not to the dark, unworthy, forebodings of doubt and terror; but remember he is faithful who has promised, who also will do it. “O, fear the Lord, ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing. The Lord God is a sun and shield; he will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” But how, say some, do these declarations accord with the experience of those who claim an interest in them? Do we not see them exposed to want as much as others? It will be proper therefore to ascertain in what sense this is to be un-

derstood, and how far it is to be extended. In order to this, we may observe, that there may be many things which we reckon conducive to the happiness of our condition, which are notwithstanding rather adventitious than essential; and many things to us apparently desirable, may be actually noxious. These may be withheld, and withheld in mercy, though we see it not. Hezekiah was sick, and wanted health; Joseph was in prison, and wanted liberty: but sickness was good and necessary for the one, and imprisonment useful to the other; but divine consolation and support were denied to neither. The estimate we make of the value of things is often widely different from that of Infinite wisdom. We call prosperity good, and adversity evil; but prosperity is frequently an evil, and adversity a good. What we deem a frown is often a favour; so little are we capable of determining the one or the other.

It has been common to distinguish in

theory between real and imaginary wants. It were well if this were the case in practice. Real wants are few, imaginary wants, numerous. Our children frequently *wish* for things which *we* know they do not *want*, and which we therefore withhold. They ask for what would be injurious to them, rather than beneficial; we deny them, and we do it in love. Just so it is with the people of God. They are yet in their minority, and must not determine for themselves. If they ask amiss, it is in mercy they are denied. It is awful when God gratifies us at the expense of spiritual consolations and soul prosperity, as in Israel's case, when he "gave them their request, but sent leanness into their souls."

This provision, however, does include the necessities both of body and soul. As it respects the former, God's people are assured that "bread shall be given them, and their water shall be sure." Superfluity is not promised, but neces-

saries are ; and David could testify, at an advanced period of his life, “I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.” But the provision intended in the text is, doubtless, rather of a spiritual than a temporal kind. It would be degrading the habitual aspirations of his mind to understand him here in reference to the body only. Spiritual blessings are chiefly intended, and in reference to these, he means to say, “I shall not want.”

1st, *Suitable direction in time of difficulty.* It is the office of a Shepherd to direct the steps of his flock. We have often seen them at a stand till guided by the Shepherd; and how often are the people of God at a loss, as it respects the way they should take?—but he has promised to “guide them by his counsel.” They are assured that they shall “hear a voice behind them, saying, this is the way, walk ye in it, when they turn to the

right hand, and when they turn to the left." "Acknowledge him in all thy ways," is the divine injunction, "and he will direct thy paths," is the encouraging promise.

The Psalmist means to say, "I shall not want."

2ndly, *Suitable support in time of need.* It is the office of a good Shepherd to supply the necessities of his flock. He acquaints himself with the particular condition of every individual sheep under his care, and directs his treatment accordingly. Our Divine Shepherd, as in all other things, has in this also the pre-eminence. He is intimately acquainted with every individual of his flock. The minutest circumstance, whether internal or external of every subject of his grace is not only known, but foreseen and provided for. The time of need cannot escape his observation, nor can that time be so distressful as to baffle his skill, or surpass

his strength.—“Is any thing too hard for the Lord?” No temptation can beset, no persecution can assault his people, for which he has not grace sufficient; and that grace he is ready to bestow. He has himself assured them of his attention to their times of need, and chides that want of faith which admits a fear to the contrary; “Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings? and not one of them is forgotten before God: but even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows.” When faith and love are in lively exercise, the believer can then say, “the Lord is my helper, I will not fear—the Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.”

The Psalmist means to say “I shall not want,”

3dly, *Suitable consolation in seasons of darkness and distress.* David was no stranger to such seasons; and, in some instances, unbelief seems to have pre-

veiled, and then he was ready for the moment to conclude, that Jehovah's "mercy was clean gone for ever, and that he would be favourable no more;" but how soon do we find him rising above these gloomy fears, and rejoicing in the God of his salvation! To seasons of spiritual darkness and distress the flock of the Redeemer are exposed during their pilgrimage on earth; but whatever may be the suggestions of unbelief, they shall not be left destitute of spiritual consolation. They may walk in darkness for a time, and have no light; but "*light is sown for the righteous;*" and what is *sown* by the divine hand, will certainly spring up in due season. Hear the cheering language of the Shepherd himself, "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." "Who, then, is there among you, that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."

Once more, the Psalmist means to say,
 “ I shall not want,”

4thly, *Suitable protection in seasons of danger.* The defence of the sheep is in their Shepherd. Helpless in themselves, and exposed to rude attacks, they need a protector. To acquit himself in that character a good Shepherd will risk himself to defend his flock. Of this David himself displayed a remarkable example when he rescued his father's flock from the ravages of a lion and a bear by slaying them both. And Jehovah, my Brethren, protects and defends his people in every age from the overwhelming power of that roaring lion, who goeth about seeking whom he may devour. You may be exposed to many dangers; but he observes all the opposition from within and from without, with which you have to contend; and while his protecting arm, his fatherly care, and his unremitting watchfulness are engaged on your side, what have you to fear? “ When thou passest,” says he,

“ through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.”

O, how safe must the flock be under such a Guardian—a Guardian ever present, whose eye never slumbers, and whose arm is omnipotent. Christian Brethren, be assured of constant protection. His presence shall be your shield and buckler, the horn of your salvation; and the high tower of your confidence.

Such is the ample provision secured to the flock of Christ. He is adequate to all their demands,—to direct in time of difficulty; to support in weakness; to console in affliction; and to protect in danger.

Another prominent consideration in the grateful effusion of the Psalmist before us is that of,

III. *Tender care and rich resources enjoyed and acknowledged.* “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.” Observe, the Psalmist speaks in the present tense to mark a solicitude never intermitted, and resources never exhausted. The allegory here employed by the Psalmist is beautifully applicable to the purpose intended. It is derived from rural life, so that the most illiterate *may* comprehend it, while the image it sets before the imagination is so truly poetical, that the most polished and refined cannot but admire it. In the age and country of David, the occupation of a Shepherd was accounted respectable. Patriarchs and Prophets and great men delighted in the care and management of their flocks and herds. The ancient Israelites, from national restraints, which were opposed to commercial pursuits, were necessarily an agricultural and pastoral people. Hence the allusions to rural scenery which occur so frequently in the Hebrew

poetry. But the “sweet Psalmist” whose words are now under our meditation, had handled the crook himself, and was admirably qualified to draw, in the liveliest manner, the life and character of the Shepherd. He has accordingly given us a graphic description, in which the care of the Shepherd, the attitude of his flock, the verdure of the pastures, and the gentle flow of the streams, compose a scene singularly pleasing to the imagination, and worthy of the painters’ pencil. But the grand and prevalent idea conveyed by the whole is that of a flock happy and thriving under the tender care of a rich and munificent Shepherd. “He *maketh* me to lie down in green pastures; he *leadeth* me beside the still waters,” where the benevolent activity of the Shepherd, and the passive enjoyment of the flock are finely and happily marked. Referring then to the divine Shepherd here appropriated, these three things are plainly included—Gracious communications—Merciful restorations—Wise and watchful guidance.

1st, *Gracious communications.* The language of the Psalmist comes evidently from a heart sensible, at the moment, of spiritual enjoyments. He is holding communion with his God, and feels a “joy that is unspeakable and full of glory.” Manifestions of the love of his Redeemer are now actually granted him,—of that love which passes knowledge, and he is filled with that “fulness of God,” which constrains him to break out with the grateful acknowledgment before us. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh,” and nothing speaks more readily or more loudly than joy. When the believer’s heart is opened to the entrance of the Holy Spirit, his graces are excited to lively exercise. “He sees the king in his beauty,”—He delights in contemplating him—He exults in his connexion with him, and exclaims, “This is my beloved, and this is my friend. This is my God; I have waited for him: I will be glad and rejoice in his salvation!”

But do you ask what are the communications from which this holy exultation springs? or how is it that the Lord “manifests himself to his people and not to the world!” Jesus answers,—“If a man love me he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” Hence the happy subject of this gracious visit derives a sense of the pardon of sin. A conviction of his own unworthiness would overwhelm him with shame in the presence of his august Visitant; but he hears him say, “I even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake and will not remember thy sins.” He derives a sense of acceptance in the Redeemer. He feels himself secure in the divine favour, and in his title to the blessings of the covenant through “him that loved him, and washed him in his own blood.” Upon such a felicitous occasion he feels the love of God shed abroad in his heart—and what communication like this for filling the soul of

the believer with joy? God, in shedding abroad his love, communicates himself; for "God is love." And O! what holy exhilaration must his presence afford! What gladness, what enlargement of soul, what attachment to God and godliness, does it create! In these favored moments, there is produced a re-action of soul, highly available to her progress in the divine life. The world and the things of the world then sink in the Christians esteem. He is carried beyond their attraction, and he feels the aspirations expressed by the Psalmist in another place, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God!" On these occasions, how delightful, how profitable, are the exercises of prayer, praise, and meditation! How refreshing the ordinances of God's house; and how readily can the soul join with the Psalmist, and say, "O how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee: how precious also are thy thoughts to me, O God!"

How desirable then are the privileges and blessings of the people of God! The green pastures into which they are led, and the still waters by which they walk, are the means of grace, in which their souls are fed and nourished, and in which they enjoy communion with God, and many delightful and refreshing seasons from his presence. The same means are, indeed, open to all; but all do not enjoy the grace of the means. The privileges of religion and the ordinances of Divine appointment exhibit verdure and afford nurture only to the soul that is enabled to feed with spiritual appetite in them. Alas! how much do they lose, who have no relish for these green pastures no desire for these still waters! Wherever else they feed, we are warranted in telling them that rank and noisome weeds are all that they obtain. Be entreated, then, ye deluded souls! to seek the pastures of the Divine Shepherd. Inquire ye “where he feeds; where he makes his flocks to rest at noon. O come, taste and see that the Lord is

good: there is no want to them that fear him."

Again, we observed on the words before us, that they include

2ndly, *Merciful restorations*. Verdant pastures and fresh streams, restore the vigour of the flock after languor, and maintain their health. In like manner, the means of grace by which the sinner is at first awakened, and brought into the fold of Christ, continue to revive and refresh him from time to time. Meeting with his God in the use of these means, his weak hands are strengthened, and his feeble knees confirmed; his fears and doubts are dispersed; his peace is restored, his courage kindled afresh; he is made to "mount up with wings as an eagle; to run and not be weary; to walk and not faint."

But there is another instructive view, in which we may consider the words of the Psalmist."—"He restoreth my soul."

—“ He mercifully seeks and brings me back when I wander from him into error and folly.” David, though particularly distinguished by the love and care of the good Shepherd, had fallen into very grievous crimes; and such is the stupefying nature of sin, that notwithstanding all his knowledge and experience of the rectitude of Jehovah’s government and the purity of his nature, he continued for many months in a state of awful insensibility and hardness. In such a state he must have remained, had not that God against whom he had offended, in the greatness of his mercy, awakened him from his dangerous stupor, discovered to him his abominable transgressions in all their heinous colours, and inspired his soul with that godly sorrow, which leadeth to repentance. Then it was that he tasted the wormwood and the gall; that he experienced feelings too acute, too painful to be described.—A sufficient warning to every one that thinketh he standeth, to take heed lest he fall. Then it was that his

base ingratitude cut him to the heart; and absorbing every other consideration constrained him to exclaim “Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.” If then this Psalm was penned subsequently to the event alluded to, we need not wonder, that when he had a sense of pardon, and found himself restored to his accustomed privileges and enjoyments, he should gratefully acknowledge, “He restoreth my soul.”

Have we, in this character, delineated that of any one in this assembly, who, after having been admitted into the fold of Christ, has wandered from it; has turned his back upon him whom he professed to love; has reverted to the world, beguiled by its pleasures, seduced by its inticements, led captive by its God? Is there one of this description present? O hear! yes, hear, thou back-sliding child, the melting, tender, language with which thou art addressed by the God of love!—“Return, ye back-

sliding children, saith the Lord, and I will have mercy upon you; I will heal your backslidings, I will love you freely; for mine anger is turned away from you!"

3rdly, *Wise and watchful guidance* is included in the words of the Psalmist. "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, for his name's sake." We have here an infallible rule whereby we may form a right judgment of ourselves. If God hath restored our souls, he also leads us in the paths of righteousness. "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, and he cannot but lead his people in the paths of righteousness, that is, in right paths, concerning which he instructs them by his word and spirit, and directs them by conscience and providence. "For his name's sake." Every thing that relates to the recovery of sinners from their apostacy, and to their restoration to the Divine favour, must have a tendency to bring glory to the name of Jehovah. It was "for his own name's sake" that the scheme of redemption was

first laid, and that those given to Christ in the covenant of grace, were called, justified, and glorified. "Who hath called us," says the Apostle, "with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began."

Such, Brethren, are the tender care and rich resources which are here so gratefully acknowledged. Well may we exclaim, "How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings."

I marvel not that this Psalm should dwell so much upon the mind of our deceased friend, when I recollect how often she has spoken to me, with tears of gratitude and joy glistening in her eyes, of the refreshing seasons with which she had been indulged, and of the spiritual provision of which she was

often allowed to partake in this sacred sanctuary. She had seasons, indeed, of lukewarmness and coldness, in common with all the children of the kingdom; and I have sometimes heard her complain with the Psalmist of being “as a beast before the Lord.” But, I believe she generally came to the house of God with earnest desires to behold his beauty, and to see his goings in the sanctuary; and she was seldom disappointed. She knew to whom to look for a blessing. She regarded instruments and means, as being (as we often remind you) only what God himself is pleased to make them; and therefore her eyes were up unto him, and her expectations from him alone,

I proceed to consider,

IV. *The happy and triumphant consummation which the Psalmist fully anticipates.* “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me,”

The paths of righteousness lead to the gates of glory. Assured of the wise and watchful guidance of the good Shepherd, the Psalmist and every believer is fully justified in his anticipations of a happy consummation. This Shepherd will not lose one sheep, nor one lamb of his flock, But in taking leave of the pastures in which they now feed, and passing on to the higher and richer scenes for which they are destined, they descend into a vale—a dark and dreary vale—it is the vale of death. It lies directly in the way, close upon the confines of the eternal world. The Christian must inevitably pass through this vale of darkness and of terror. He knows that the trying hour approaches; and it is salutary for him to revolve it frequently in his mind, and to hold himself in readiness against it. David was, by no means, unmindful of his latter end. He did not neglect, like the many, the consideration of that solemn period. Alas! the generality of mankind are averse from the thoughts of death. Nothing is more

unwelcome to them ; and whenever such thoughts intrude, they are banished quickly from the mind, as visitants not merely unbidden, but highly offensive. Involved in a multiplicity of worldly cares, and dissipated by mirthful scenes of human vanity, mankind are too apt to forget that death awaits them ; and if the sun of prosperity has shone upon them, how ready are they to congratulate themselves, like the rich man in the Gospel, when their souls, at the very time may be demanded of them. David had great earthly possessions ; but he did not calculate, as many do, upon a lengthened enjoyment of them. He acknowledged himself to be a stranger and sojourner upon earth, and was looking forward to a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Though surrounded with all that heart could wish, he thought often on death. His departure hence was frequently the chosen theme of his meditations, and being a partaker of Divine grace, and the subject of a renewed heart, it was

his privilege to be able to look forward to it without dismay.”—“I will fear no evil.” How few can really and truly say this! Alas! what numbers look forward to death with painful apprehensions! And why?—Because they know that it is the wages of sin—because, when absent from the body, they are afraid, and well they may, of consignment to the bottomless pit, which is threatened in the divine word to those who live and die in the practice of sin. Such characters, unrenewed by the Holy Spirit and strangers to God, as their reconciled God in Christ Jesus, cannot but look forward to death with some degree of terror and dismay. There may be a difference, indeed according to mens’ natural dispositions, and the circumstances in which they may be placed; but the contemplation of death can be no otherwise than terrific to an unregenerate man. “The righteous only hath hope in his death.” He knows that “to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord,” and that “when

the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, he has a building of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

While some however, fear the *consequences*, well knowing that they are not prepared to die; others fear the *circumstances*, who have no need to fear. They look forward, at times, with terror to the harbingers of death. They have seen the ghastly tyrant reigning triumphant over the breathless clay of beloved relatives and friends. They have seen the bloom that once flushed the cheek of health destroyed—the eyes that once sparkled with intelligence, and spoke the language of compassion and sympathy, glazed and fixed in death, and the lips that spoke the words of affection and consolation, pale and motionless—and their feelings have been shocked. Looking forward, therefore, to such melancholy circumstances as these, they may occasionally fear, who have no need to fear. What have they to fear, who have God for their

Shepherd, their Guardian and Friend, their reconciled God and Father in Christ Jesus? They are taught to regard death as

“ A kind conveyance from the post of woe

“ To mansions where eternal pleasures grow.”

“ Thou art with me.” The Psalmist argues from the present to the future, and he had a Scriptural warrant to do so. Enjoying, as he did, the Divine presence, he justly calculates upon it, according to the Divine promise, not only in every future stage of life, but in its concluding scenes, and in his passage through that valley which led to the Paradise of God, where he knew he should awake in the divine likeness, and be for ever with the Lord. And thus every believer may and ought to calculate. He has the earnest of the Spirit in his heart—a deposit, by which the God of all grace engages to fulfil all his promises—a pledge to assure him of the full payment of every stipulated mercy and blessing.

The anticipations of the believer, as to the event of death, are founded also on the victory which his Redeemer has acquired over that last enemy, and over the grave itself. He has indeed to pass through the dark valley of this gloomy tyrant; but his Redeemer went through before him, and he knows it well—he passed it not as a *victim*, but as a *victor*. It was predicted of him, long before he appeared in the flesh, that “he should swallow up death in victory.” In the prospect of the triumph which he was to enjoy he is represented as declaring, “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O Death, I will be thy plagues; O Grave, I will be thy destruction.” For this purpose the son of God, the Prince of life, was manifested in the flesh, that he might destroy death, and him that had the power of death. Though to outward appearance, death seemed to get the victory over him, yet he actually vanquished the enemy in his own dominions. By the sacrifice of himself he

took away sin, which is the sting of death; and, by enduring death in the room of his people, he cancelled the obligations they had been brought under to suffer death as the punishment of transgression, and rendered the passage of his followers safe and comfortable through this otherwise dark and dreary valley. He hath indeed changed the nature of death to his people, and converted the enemy into a friend, the curse into a blessing. From being a punishment of sin it becomes the believer's deliverance from evil, the entrance into immortal life and glory; and at the morning of the resurrection, the clay deposits shall be claimed from their tombs. We do not bid our Christian friends an everlasting farewell, when we consign their bodies to the dust.—O, no! “This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”

Such was the animating prospect, and such the pleasing anticipations with

which our esteemed friend Mrs. Blackett was indulged, for many years previous to her departure hence, and I now proceed to gratify the expectations of this numerous and respectable assembly by giving a brief account of the Lord's dealings with her, and of the manner in which she was supported and comforted in passing through "the valley of the shadow of death."

Suffer me, however to premise that in what we have now to offer respecting the deceased, we mean not to extol the creature ; but to set forth the rich grace and mercy of the Saviour. She is now beyond the reach of human censure or applause ; but when one is made to differ from another, or from their former selves, it is proper to point out the nature of that change, and to show to whom the praise of effecting it is due. Whatever amiable qualities appear in individual characters, let it be remembered that, originally, all are alike guilty and depraved in the sight of God. Who-

ever, therefore, is made the subject of a saving change; renewed, pardoned and accepted, is indebted to mercy for it; and an event like the present is an opportunity which the minister of religion willingly embraces, to magnify the mercy and recommend the grace of God, by which the departed spirit has been peculiarly distinguished.

Our deceased friend appears to have been the subject of serious impressions at the early age of *fourteen*. Then it was that she first began to feel that “godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation;” and from that period, to the close of life, notwithstanding many interruptions, temptations, and snares, she was enabled to cleave unto the Lord, with purpose of heart, in a diligent attendance upon his ordinances, and a sacred delight in his ways. The kind and seasonable instructions of a pious Grandfather, and the ministry of the word, which she constantly attended, were blessed of God to promote the

growth of those divine principles, which were obviously implanted in her heart. Her religious impressions were cherished and strengthened during her attendance at Pell Street Chapel, the Weigh-house, and on the ministry of that eminent servant of Christ, the late Rev. I. Newton. On becoming a mother, it appears to have been the earnest desire of her heart to train up her children in the fear of God. She uniformly took them with her to the means of grace; while opportunities were frequently embraced at home to impress some Scripture-truths upon their tender minds. On the removal of her family to Highbury, she united with this congregation, then worshipping in the Grove. The Church was formed in the year 1804, and she was one of the first who came forward to enrol her name with some of her fellow-worshippers, who had long desired to give a public testimony of their love to Jesus, the sinner's friend. From that period to the hour of her death, it was my privilege to be upon terms of tender and un-

broken friendship with her; and, if fourteen years of such friendship will enable any one to speak with confidence of another, I feel no hesitation in affirming, that I have every reason to believe, she walked humbly with her God. Of the constancy of her attendance upon the ordinances—of that spiritual sensibility which she discovered under the word, and especially at the Table of the Lord—of the sweetness of her disposition, and the correctness of her judgment, as displayed in the management of those institutions in which she took a part, and of her liberality in affording them support, many of you are witnesses. But it has been *my* happiness to converse with her, from time to time, on the things pertaining to the kingdom; and to hear from her own lips what the Father of mercies *had* done, and was doing for her soul. The relation, I can say with truth, always afforded me satisfaction and delight. It was evident to me that she was taught by the Holy Spirit, and that she earnestly

desired to be more and more conformed to the image of her Lord. Allow me to give one specimen out of many instances that I have found amongst my memorandums.

“In the course of fifty years,” said she, “it may be supposed that I have had *some* trials; but I can truly say, that I never had one that I would wish to have been without. I have experienced much of the kindness of my Heavenly Father in them. He indeed has caused them to work together for my good. He knew what I required to humble me. He leads the blind by a way they know not; and thus he is leading me.—Glory be to his name. He has supported, and will support. What a delightful word is that, “God is faithful: he will fulfil the desire of them that fear him.” In this I rejoice, and in this I find peculiar satisfaction. He that hath showed me great and sore troubles, will not leave me.”

" Amidst a thousand snares I stand,
 " Upheld and guarded by thy hand;
 " Thy words my fainting soul revive
 " And keep my dying faith alive."

According to her own acknowledgment, she was naturally of a lofty disposition; though, I believe, I may venture to say, this was the last thing which her Christian friends would have suspected; for in her general deportment there was that sweet, modest, diffidence which is the ornament of the female character. She often lamented what she had to combat with from what she conceived her besetting sin; while she was aware of the necessity of her trials, and gratefully acknowledged the kindness of her God in them all.

As a friendly storm blows off the insects which would injure the fruit in our gardens, while it carries away a quantity of the fruit itself, the exuberance of which would be prejudicial to the whole; so afflictions are often the salutary means

of removing those worldly attachments that injure the beauty of Christian graces, of checking warmth of temper, and of regulating natural dispositions. which without such visitations would greatly retard the growth of the soul in grace. Our friend was frequently called to endure; yet no truth was more deeply engraven upon her heart than this, that "it was the right way to the city of habitation." She had many conflicts, many painful struggles; but her desire was to be enabled to "glorify God in the fires," and to love her Saviour more and serve him better.

The following copy of a letter, dated March 28th 1815, to a near relative, found among her papers since her death, affords a satisfactory evidence of the Scriptural views she entertained of the way of salvation, and of her own interest therein. It is a relique of no small value to her surviving friends, and relatives, who, I doubt not, will prize it as it deserves.

* * * * * *Time is short.* God grant you may be led to consider it! Often have I wished, and, I hope, prayed for you, that you may be weaned from earthly things. Be assured, they have had too much the dominion. They have engrossed your time and your talent,—yes, and your heart too. But the time must soon come, when we must leave all that the world calls good: and then, if we have no better prop than these perishing treasures, we shall be ready to call on the mountains to cover us.—Great and gracious God! look down in mercy upon us! * * * * *. Give thy servant liberty in prayer for her dear children, that she may have a good hope, that, as thou art the *hearer*, thou wilt also be the *answerer* of prayer on their behalf. Into thy hands *alone* I desire to commit their souls and bodies, with all their minor concerns; being fully persuaded of this, that if *thou* dost not keep them, they must be eternally lost. Great God! I entreat thee again to save their souls for Christ's sake, Amen.”

“It may not be improper, before I drop this most important subject, to state to you on what grounds I depend for the salvation of my soul; and O, that God may direct my thoughts, that I may not be permitted to write any thing that may lead you into an error.

“The salvation of my soul, then, in my opinion, does not depend upon any performances of *my own*, as it respects duties, or sufferings. Not but that both are necessary to fill up the Christian character. Let duties be ever so punctually performed, or sufferings ever so patiently endured, they cannot atone for a thought that is contrary to the command of God. These blessings are the effects of his grace, not of any goodness in the creature. The salvation of my soul; then, in my opinion rests in the love of God the Father, proved by his gift of the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for the sins of his people, and through whose sufferings, death, resurrection and intercession, I can alone be pardoned, accepted and glorified.

“Thus have I given you a confession of my faith. It is very short; but if it is correct, may God make it *your* experience; and I trust it is, or it would be an awful thing to leave it as a dying testimony.”

On the first Lord's day in January she attended for the last time, at the Table of the Lord, in this place. I visited her on the 14th, when she remarked, in the course of conversation, “In reviewing the way in which I have been led, this is the deliberate judgment of my mind, that my trials have been my greatest mercies. I see they have been working together for my good; nor am I anxious as it respects the issue of my present affliction. I wish to lie passive in the hands of my heavenly Father, and to know no will but his. I leave my children and my grandchildren to the care of a covenant God, and I am sure they will be taken care of.”

January 30th, she remarked to one of her attendants, “My breath is very bad; and I feel a deadness of soul—but He is

all-sufficient!" The attendant replied,
 "I have been much refreshed this morn-
 ing with these sweet lines,

"Sweet to reflect, how grace divine,

"My sins on Jesus laid;

"Sweet to remember that his blood

"My debt of suffering paid."

"Nothing else will do," she replied,
 "but I feel at present as if I could
 not say a word for Christ. But this I
 know, if ever he has made me the instru-
 ment of any good, the glory is his; for if
 a good thought would merit heaven, of
 myself I have it not. How much rebel-
 lion do I often feel! I cannot utter the
 Lord's prayer, as I ought, without his
 assistance.—But, O, how wonderfully
 has the Lord supported me for some years
 past! What afflictions has he brought me
 through! My strength has been equal to
 my day; and I pray that I may not dis-
 trust him now."

Some relations, whom she was desirous

of seeing, being present, her soul appeared to enjoy peculiar liberty; and she began, in a most delightful strain, “How I love that sweet Psalm that my dear little children repeat, ‘The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want,’ “Yes, he is *my* Shepherd—I *do* not want.” ‘He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; “Yes, where I have many a sweet repose.” And thus she went on through the Psalm, adding at the end of the 4th verse, “Why should I fear a shadow?—I bless God, *I have no fear*, for *thou* art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” She then observed, “The Lord has been preparing me, some time, for this day of trial, and the promise is, as thy day, so shall thy strength be! My God is mighty to save, else where should *I have been?*”

A Reverend friend, who called to see her, addressed her, as he entered the room, with, “Here you are, my dear Madam, where the Lord has been pleased to lay you.” “Yes,” replied she, “I

am in good hands, waiting the will of my heavenly Father."

Early on Saturday morning, she asked one of her female attendants to think of a promise, when these words were repeated, "This God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death."—She instantly caught the words, and going over them again, with great energy, added, "that's the 48th Psalm; and how suitable for me." In the course of that morning, I called to see her; and when I said, "I hope you find that Saviour, who has been with you in so many troubles past, with you *now*, administering to you consolation and support; and that you can say, "I *know* in whom I have believed." She replied, "Yes, I hope I can say so, I have no other refuge—no other resource; nor do I do desire any other. My mind is remarkably tranquil, and I hope it is not a false peace; but I sometimes fear lest it should be." When directed to call to remembrance the days of old—the change that had taken place

in her mind with respect to sin, the Saviour and holiness—the spiritual repasts and refreshing seasons enjoyed—the immutability of Jehovah, and the faithfulness of his promises. She replied, Certainly, there has been a great change; but you have no idea of my lukewarmness and my backwardness to prayer.—The review confounds me. Still, Christ is all!—Yes, he is all my salvation and all my desire.—“What a mercy,” she added, with an animated countenance, after prayer, “to realize an interest in that promise which you have just mentioned, ‘I will never leave thee!’ that applied once is sufficient. I do not mean, in respect of comfort; for we need the comfort of it continually; but if God once say to my soul, ‘I will never leave thee,’ I may believe him, and look to him for the fulfilment of his promise.”

At another time, when mentioning, with much affection, her valuable friends, she added, that it was a great source of consolation to her, that she had a son

and daughter so dutiful and affectionate; and that she had noticed of late, that the world did not engross their affections as formerly; that they had turned their backs on its lying vanities, and were really seeking, she hoped, “the one thing needful.”

When her daughter said, on perceiving her great resignation, “My dear Mother! I cannot shed a tear of sorrow!”—She lifted up her hands, and with great earnestness replied—“delightful!—delightful!—quite an answer to prayer!”

To three young persons she addressed herself in a very affecting manner, warning each to avoid the follies of the world, and directing them to Christ, as the only refuge, saying, “He has promised to be found of them that seek him. What should I do without such a Saviour *now*.”—May they remember the words of their dying relative; and be found seeking those blessings which so effectually supported her, in the prospect of death and eternity!

On another occasion, she said, "What an awful thing, to have children and servants, and to feel no concern about their souls!—My dear child! (to her daughter) do not look at me.—There is nothing but sin and misery in me; but look to my Saviour—there you will do right, and do well. I have been trying," she continued, "to recollect a line or two that was a great comfort to one of God's children." She had mentioned them before, and they happened to be fresh in the recollection of one present; who repeated,

"A fearful saint shall win the day,

"Though death and hell obstruct the way!"

when she observed I cannot always take the comfort of the promises; but I hope I shall not be left at the last. He has promised to be with me to the end; therefore why should I doubt."

On Sunday morning, February 1st, being evidently much worse, she begged that prayer might be offered for an easy dismissal, if consistant with the will of

God, adding, "The contest will soon be over.—Death and Hell are conquered enemies. I bless God, I have no fear. but I hope I am not presuming."

In the course of that day she suffered much; but in patience she was enabled to possess her soul; and seemed to be greatly comforted and encouraged in hearing some of her favourite hymns, which at her request were read to her.*

At one time she said, "I could say a verse; but I am afraid it will be too much for S——'s feelings." Being urged to repeat it, she began

' Then, when ye hear my heart-strings break,
How sweet the minutes roll!
A mortal paleness on my cheek,
And glory in my soul!

* It will be gratifying to her friends to know, that the following are Hymns which she highly prized, and which gave her much pleasure, the last day or two of her life, "Not all the blood of Beasts," &c. "Behold the throne of Grace," &c. "'Tis a point I long to know," &c. "To tell the Saviour all my wants," &c. "How sweet the name of Jesus!" &c.

At another time she said; "I have been long thinking of a sweet verse in one of Lady Huntingdon's Hymns; but I cannot tell where it is"

' Lord ! what are all my suff'rings here
If thou but make me meet,
With that enraptur'd host t' appear,
And worship at thy feet."

An hour or two before the spirit of our dear friend left its clay tenement, as the close of the day of sacred rest approached, a Reverend friend was requested to implore the Divine blessing on the medicines about to be administered, and which had been prescribed by an eminent physician, who had been called in on that day. Previous to prayer, the minister said, "Well, Madam, I suppose, like Hezekiah, you want a blessing on the bunch of figs?" "Yes, Sir," she replied, "I do; but lay no stress either way. Just as *He* pleases; who does all things well; and if it be not his will to bless them means, pray that *inefficacy* may be given." In receiving the pill into her hand, shortly

after, she lifted up her eyes and heart to Heaven in most fervent and solemn prayer, commending herself to her Heavenly Father. And about ten minutes before her death she *again* requested that prayer might be offered for an easy dismissal, which was most remarkably answered, for she fell asleep in death, without a struggle or a groan; saying, "Lord Jesus! receive my spirit."—"Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." This we are encouraged to hope was the case with our deceased friend. United to Jesus by a true and living faith, it was her privilege to receive from him as the head of his body, the Church, all needful supplies of grace, during her pilgrimage; and when she approached "the valley of the shadow of death," she found his presence her support and comfort.

Ah! religion is a grand reality! Nothing—nothing else will afford consolation to the mind in the near view of death and eternity. Philosophy tenders its aid

in vain. The Gospel of Jesus, and that alone, affords effectual relief. This it did for our departed friend, and this it does for all who are brought to receive it.

Three Christian graces appear particularly to have been in lively exercise during the last days of the dear deceased, *Humility,—Resignation,—Peace.*

1st, *Humility.* She had learned of him who could say, “I am meek and lowly.” A consciousness of her guilt and unworthiness obliterated every idea of self-importance and of merit, and laid her low at her Saviour’s feet. She had the meanest opinion of herself, but the most exalted views of her adorable Redeemer. To him, and him alone, she gave the praise of all she had experienced and enjoyed, saying, “Not unto me, not unto me, O Lord, but unto thy name be all the glory.”

2ndly, *Resignation.* The language of her lips and of her conduct, like that of

her Divine Master, was, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it!" She was enabled to say, "I desire to have no will of my own: I resign myself into God's hands, body, soul and spirit; and I can say, I have not an anxious care about *one* of my family." When a friend said, "You mean that if the turning of a straw would alter the Divine counsels, for either life or death, you would not do it," she answered, "God forbid I should!"—"I have often," said she, "had many anxious cares about my dear little children (meaning her grandchildren) and when their dear mother committed the dear little boy to me, I engaged in it with earnest solicitude for his welfare; and now I have been spared as long as my Lord sees fit, and he is about to take me, I have not one anxious care about them."

3rdly, *Peace*. The prospect of death is indeed the time of alarm. The confines of eternity are approached with dread; but knowing in whom she had believed,

and satisfied that he would keep that which she had committed to him, our deceased friend, though without those triumphant extacies which have marked the departure of some, enjoyed that delightful peace, and sweet tranquillity which “neither pains nor prospects could disturb.” She was a woman of great spiritual sensibility. Seldom could she speak of what God had done, and was doing for her, without tears,—but they were tears of joy. This sensibility was manifest to the last: In her were fulfilled the words of Isaiah, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is staid on thee.”

As a wife and a mother, she was tender and affectionate; not concerned merely for the temporal, but the spiritual and eternal welfare of her children.—O, let them remember her solicitude and care, and be concerned to follow her, as she followed Christ.

As a mistress, she was kind and gentle, and desirous no less of promoting the

spiritual interests, than the domestic comforts of her household. May those that served her, seek to be made partakers of the same grace and be found adorning the doctrine of God, our Saviour, in all things.

As a Member of this Church, she was enabled to walk worthy of her Christian calling, maintaining the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. To the riches of Divine grace be all the glory. What she was, she was by the grace of God. And may such illustrious examples of grace animate and encourage us, whose faces are Zion-ward, to press forward, "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith."

It remains now only to address myself to three distinct quarters, that seem especially admonished by this solemn providence.

1st. How are the surviving relatives and friends of the deceased admonished,

by the loss they have sustained, to seek the Lord while he is to be found!—to set their affections on things above, and not on things on the earth,—to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness! and to lay up for themselves treasures in heaven! You have lost a valuable friend, and the Preacher sympathizes with you—many pious and excellent neighbours sympathize with you, and many petitions have been presented to the throne of grace, in your behalf, that the bereaving stroke you have sustained may be sanctified, and that it may make such salutary impressions in your extensive circle, as may never be erased. It may be, you have lost, to adopt the language of one who feels for himself and two lovely babes, “the main pillar of your house,”—but “the Lord liveth, and blessed be our rock; and let the God of our salvation be exalted.” When he takes away our earthly props, is it not to lead us to lean more constantly and firmly upon himself. Is he not saying to you by this stroke, “Lean not on an arm of flesh?”

O listen to his voice, and remember that you are “strangers and pilgrims, and that this is not your rest.” You see how our deceased friend was supported and comforted in the prospect of death; but such support and comfort belong not to them who are strangers to God and Christ and the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit. They may say, and many do say, “God is merciful, and we hope in his mercy.” But such hope has no Scriptural warrant. “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven? The unrenewed cannot say, “The Lord is my Shepherd.” This is the language of the heaven-born and of them only. “The wages of sin is death,” and O, how often do transgressors feel an earnest of that future misery which awaits them hereafter, in the hour of solitude, even *now* when conscience takes them aside, and rates them by themselves.”

The comforts of religion cannot mingle with the pleasures of sin, nor can the cheering hope, full of immortality, be

cherished in the company of the licentious and the gay.—Sirs! ye must be born again; ye must be created anew in Christ Jesus, before ye can share in the privileges of the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty.

2nd. How is this Church and congregation again admonished, as ye have been, my Christian friends, repeatedly before, of the uncertain tenure by which your religious privileges are held! Your opportunities of getting good and doing good may soon be over. It is well to work while it is called to day, and to do what our hands find to do, with our might. A few, and only a very few, more sabbath privileges may remain for some of you. A few, and only a few more opportunities of speaking for God to those around you and connected with you; and of doing something for the cause of the Redeemer, may be allowed, and you also may be called to go the way you shall not return. We often hear persons in sickness lament neglected opportunities; but

we never hear any complain, that they embraced too many, that they had been too active—too much devoted to the service of God, and the cause of the Redeemer.—Oh no! they who are made partakers of the Divine nature, and who rest all their hopes of acceptance and eternal life on the atonement of Christ, never, never will have to lament that they have done too much for him, who has done so much for them. Seek then, Christian Brethren, to live *to* God and *for* God, that when you come to “walk through the valley of the shadow of death,” you may enjoy the presence and the smile of your Divine Shepherd, and that “an abundant entrance may be administered unto you, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

3rdly. Finally, How are the young again admonished to seek the Lord in the days of their youth! Our deceased friend did so; and ye have heard the advantages that followed that early dedication of herself to God—how she was preserved

and kept with her face Zion-wards amid innumerable temptations and dangers. Would you be kept from the evil that is in the world? Would you be made partakers of those consolations and joys which our friend experienced, in the hour of sickness and in the prospect of death? “Remember, then, your Creator, in the days of your youth.” The youngest individual amongst you is not too young to die; and be assured that judgment will find you with the same image and superscription, with which you leave the world. We have nothing to promise you from that too common dependance, a death-bed repentance.—Oh no! experience has long demonstrated that repentance on a sick bed is often more specious than real, more flattering than safe.—“Seek ye the Lord, therefore, while he may be found, call upon him, while he is near,” and for your encouragement, know that it is written, “I love them that love me; and they that seek me early shall find me.”

